

to salvation. I know of a town where the Congregational church formed a visiting committee and visited the sick day after day, saying nothing about their church and nothing about religion. They paid kindly, helpful visits inquired at doors and left flowers. The two other churches in that town finally closed out. Of course they did for the Congregational church visited the sick and the needy. Every church should do such work."

All this suggests that it is one thing for a pastor and his people to talk to persons about the goodness of the Christian religion, but that it is quite another thing when they act out such religion by helping people to bear their burdens and endure their sorrows. Christ said some plain words about visiting the sick and caring for the needy, the widow and fatherless. If more pastors would do such work, and also set their people at it, they would have larger congregations and greater fruits following their labors than they now have. Pay attention to the best methods of work!

#### THE WORKED OUT SALVATION

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The Apostolic injunction to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" must be reconciled on some theological basis or other with the very much preached doctrine that the whole business can be finished in the twinkling of an eye by a sudden conversion and a sweeping pardon. The confusion of ideas here arises from the narrowness of our conception, or plainly stated from our dense ignorance of the philosophy of salvation, an ignorance which is not very much enlightened, we are bound to say, by that extensive fog bank which we call theology.

It ought to be a very simple and easily understood proposition, that divine forgiveness of the sin of extravagance, or covetousness, or self indulgence, or dissipation, must not be expected to pay the debts which those sins incurred. If every inimical account is wiped out, by the divine pardon, or "the blood," Zaccheus made quite an expensive mistake when he offered to make fourfold restitution on account of his short accounts and long extortions. That man needed instruction. All he had to do was to ask the Lord's forgiveness and hold the boodle. It's according to the theology. All our sins were laid on Christ, He bore them, suffered the whole penalty, paid the whole debt, and consequently, per sound logic, and sound theologies, we are not under the slightest obligation to cough up the profitable result of that sharp transaction with neighbor Jones. Could Satan himself devise a cheaper religion, by which a man can straighten out the rascally peculations of a life time without letting it cost him a cent. "Jesus paid it all."

Not so. At any rate he didn't tell Zaccheus that the divine pardon was sufficient to balance his ledger, and you will notice if you read carefully that the important decla-

ration of the Lord that "salvation had come to that house" was only made after the little Publican had squared his business matters on the basis of absolute equity, and with a tremendously heavy outlay of money. In this way he "worked out" his salvation, and we are of the opinion that the same process is as indispensable with us as it was with him. If in disobedience of some divine command I go a thousand miles into some wilderness, pardon comes when I repent and turn, but after the repenting and the turning and the forgiveness comes the painful trudging back over that thousand miles before I get out of the wilderness into which my folly led me. Or taking a familiar example, there can be no doubt that Jonas was forgiven his disobedience very soon after his distinguished introduction to the whale, but after the forgiveness came the painful journey back to Niniveh, a considerable portion of which was doubtless accomplished in the badly ventilated cabin of the aforesaid whale himself.

We need not cite hypothetical illustrations or go three thousand miles back into the vanishing distance of antiquity, for a very little reflection and some intelligent observation will show us to a certainty, that whatever sort of undoing a man may indulge in, be he saint or sinner, whether he damage his health of body or health of mind whether he carelessly damage his reputation, or whatever fool thing he may do in contravention of any sort of law, physical, moral or spiritual, if he be brought to the point of seeing his folly and undertakes to recover himself, a long and painful process of working out his salvation inevitably ensues, in which he finds to his sorrow that it is far easier to make a mess than to mend it, to damn a reputation than to save it.

Let us take a Ghristain man who by certain little habits of sharp practice in business or by any other unwisdom, has steadily depreciated his influence and his reputation for almost a lifetime; granting that he should be at all able to radically reform his methods, his manner of life, revive a delicately sensitive discretion, how long, even after the accomplishment of these miracles, will it take him to work out his salvation? How long will it take him to stand once more, or stand perhaps for the first time, securely upon that high pinnacle of unchallenged reputation, of splendid influence, of spiritual and moral power, wide spreading and potential for good, as becomes a man who sets forth the manliness and splendor of Christ to the world?

What a pity that in this short life a man, and particularly a Christian man, should travel away from that ideal, even for a day, even for an hour. Swiftly may he decline from it. Painfully and slowly must he ascend to it.

Our deeds still travel with us from afar,  
And what we have been make us what we are."

—George Eliot.

#### The First Temptation

The British Monthly publishes the following article on "The First Temptation" which will be found helpful to Sunday school workers and Bible students in general.

Let us consider the great First Temptation of Man, the story of Gen. 3. I shall not attempt to discuss the deep question how far we are to take every detail of that chapter literally. It is no mere "allegory," It puts before us an awful fact; I am sure of this. But the first few pages of Scripture, in the nature of their subjects, are so mysterious that we may well hold out our peace when the question is asked, Is every word to be taken literally? Do these chapters tell us their story in the same style of detail as that in which we are told, for example, the shipwreck of St. Paul? Is it not at least possible that, as the last pages of the Bible tell us of a glorious and blissful future in terms of symbol and figures, so the first pages of the Bible tell us in the same style of the most mysterious past? Gates of pearl and streets of gold are assuredly to be understood as symbols of "the glory to be revealed." The same may be true of many a phrase used to depict the "glory" of man's first estate, and his fall from it. But I say all this by the way. Here is the picture before us. We are called to study the fact of the First Temptation in the terms given us in the word of God.

What do we see, then, in mystery so revealed to us?

First, we see that man was, from the beginning, in wisdom of God, placed under a gentle but real test by his heavenly Friend, and permitted through it to be enticed by his enemy.\* His obedience was tested by a firm, while mild, prohibition. His will was enticed into revolt by a misrepresentation of the mind of Him who had forbidden him "the fruit." A thousand varieties of temptation can be grouped in one class in the light of that fact.

Then the First Temptation is one in which the evil power approached man thru what, in itself, was purely good. What can be fairer to thought than the fruit of a tree in the Garden of God? No poison could lurk in that "fruit" itself. The only evil lay in the fact that, for purposes of divine love, and perhaps only for a season even so, its use was forbidden. The thing was good, the pure creation of the all-perfect Maker. But his command, "Thou shalt not eat," made the using of it evil.

Have we not here again a type of whole worlds of temptation? In countless cases the thing through which the temptation comes from beneath is a thing whose origin is from above, yea, from the Father of Lights, the Giver of good and perfect gift (James 1: 17). It is something beautiful and pure in itself, and the use of which, under other conditions, or at any other times, may be as right as it is delightful. But some high reason says to us, just now, in view of that particular tree of God's own garden of